



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

[www.LansingHistory.org](http://www.LansingHistory.org)

July 2015

## Upcoming July Events

### July Walking Tours

*Historic Homes in the Heart of Downtown*  
Thursday, July 9 - 7:00pm  
Meets at the Old Carnegie Library at  
210 W. Shiawassee St.

This tour will focus on the architectural styles of five downtown Lansing homes and their continuing evolution. We'll discuss some significant home owners, including a former Supreme Court Justice and an executive of the Lansing Company, the rise of apartment living, and the adaption of some of the homes into businesses.

*Downtown Lansing's Favorite Old Restaurants*  
Saturday, July 25 - 10:00am

Meets at Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.

Whet your appetite for history with this tasty walk through the history of some of Lansing's most beloved restaurants, including Kewpee's, Foo Ying, Jim's Tiffany, the Famous Grill, Home Dairy, and Archie Tarpoff's, where celebrities such as Jerry Lewis, Betty Hutton, and Gordan MacRae dined while in town.

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*Vintage Views Along Scenic M-22 Lecture  
and Book Signing*

Thursday, July 30 - 7:00pm

East Lansing Public Library, 950 Abbot Rd.

Enjoy an armchair vacation along west Michigan's beautiful M-22 with M. Christine Byron and Thomas R. Wilson's new book featuring vintage postcards, photographs, maps, and advertisements. Books will be available for purchase and signing.

## Lansing Snapshots: From Sepia to Selfies

HSGL and the Library of Michigan are partnering together for our next exhibit, Lansing Snapshots: From Sepia to Selfies, which will open this fall. We're looking for both professional and amateur photos chronicling calamities and weather disasters, cultural markers (prom, first communion, senior pictures, wedding photos, bar/bat mitzvahs), recreation (such as Lake Lansing), famous Lansing residents (such as R.E. Olds, Malcolm W, Earvin Johnson, and the Stratosphere Man) and photos of minorities (including African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and others), as well as scrapbooks and rare photographic and camera equipment.

If you have photos or equipment that you'd be willing share with us, please call us at (517) 282-0671 or send an e-mail to [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org) before July 30. Learn more about exhibit at [www.lansinghistory.org](http://www.lansinghistory.org).



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## HSGL Auction Date Set for October 10

HSGL is pleased to announce that we will be hosting our fifth annual silent auction at historic Eastern High School on Saturday, October 10, from 4:00pm-6:30pm. We are busy collecting donations for the auction! To donate, call 517-282-0671 or e-mail [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org).

**The Dines Terrace Room on Michigan Avenue  
in Lansing**

*by Roni Sherbino Sionakides*

George Dines was a Lansing phenomenon. An immigrant from Macedonia with a dream to better his life, he did exactly that. The Terrace Room, his well-known restaurant located at 321 E. Michigan Avenue, four blocks from the Capitol Building, hosted politicians, celebrities and just plain local residents of the area. It was the most popular night spot from its inception in 1951 to its end in 1973.

On July 10, 1928, a 13-year-old boy from Macedonia arrived in the port of New York City on the S. S. Majestic, Third Class, Aliens, sailing from Cherbourg, France on July 4, 1928. Alone he was traveling to Battle Creek in Calhoun County, Michigan to join his father who had immigrated a few years earlier to work as a boilermaker on the Grand Trunk Western Railroad, a stay that was permanent. He was the last member of his immediate family to immigrate, his father, his uncle and family coming earlier, all to Battle Creek. The family lived together at 31 Second Street.

George Kostas Dines was born November 21, 1915 in what is today Skopia Florinas [sko pee-AH] to Kostas George Dines and his wife, Petra [Perta Croshoftsa on George's marriage record]. Immigration records indicate he was born in Florina, Macedonian Greece, an area covering today's Northern Greece. Kosta Dines was born in Nevoliani, Macedonian Greece, another name for Skopia Florinas or Florina. The area is on the border with southwestern Republic of Macedonia.

In 1915 when George was born, the area had become independent from the Ottoman Empire only a couple years before during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. This period of conflict divided the area into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the north, a portion that went to Greece in the

south and a portion to Bulgaria in the east. Macedonia was an ancient, large area with both ethnic Greeks and later Slavic peoples populating it. The southern area was primarily ethnic Greek and most likely had been since the Bronze Age as Greek-speaking peoples moved into the older Mycenaean-Greek areas. The Greek Civil War that started immediately after the end of World War II was an attempt by the Communist Southern Slavs to annex Greek Macedonia. Much of the war was centered in the northern part of Greece in the heavily mountainous and isolated areas. This area of constant conflict was where George, and his father before him, came from. Poverty following war and stress drove the family to move. They had no place to go but up!

George joined his father, Kostas George Dines, and uncle, Anastas Dines, in Battle Creek. He spoke only Greek, no English. But he learned quickly. His father boarded him with a French lady, Grandma Wattier, who attempted to teach him English. He was enrolled in the Franklin Street School on Green Street where he stayed until 1930 when the Depression settled in, wanting to strike out on his own. He washed pots and pans for his meals, mopped floors at night, all the while studying to be a barber and hairdresser. He opened his first barber shop in Battle Creek on the east side near the Postum Cereal plant, an occupation he was pursuing when he married.



Restless and with a desire to see the country around him, he went to Detroit then to California. In 1936 he came back to Michigan to attend the wedding of his cousin in Lansing and there he met Nevenka Valcanoff. That led to a correspondence and later marriage on February 10, 1941 in Defiance County, Ohio. The young couple made Lansing their home. Just prior to that he had traveled back to his home in Greece to see how the area was faring after war and division, returning on October 14. Unfortunately, it was in a miserable state. His boyhood friends were struggling. He came back, saying "If I never go out of the United States again, I will never regret it." It was probably a good decision. The European struggle to survive after World War I lead to a second conflict, World War II, and the following Greek Civil War. Although he had volunteered twice to serve in the war and was turned down because of health issues, he went to Nash-Kelvinator for defense work; there were three plants in Lansing.

George followed in his father's and uncle's footsteps. His father went from the railroads to operating a café in Battle Creek. Anastas Dines opened a restaurant,

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Little Lawrence Restaurant at 505 E. Shiawassee in Lansing. And his cousin, Theodore Dines, was the proprietor of International Grocery at 734 E. Grand River. He had experience and resources at his fingertips.

After the war was over George bought the Metropole, a Lansing bar that he renamed George's Bar. By 1948 he opened the Diplomat on North Washington, a cocktail lounge which soon became famed for nationally known entertainers and fine food. In 1950 he purchased Jim Sepeter's Hunt Room and bowling alley, located at 317-321 E. Michigan Avenue, near the current Lansing Center. It became the Terrace Room, one of the City's most popular dining and dancing places. The bowling alley was also operated by George until 1960 when it was closed.

The restaurant at the time was the only restaurant in Lansing where dinner, good music and dancing were available. It could seat 800 at one time. There was a main room and several terraces that could be separated by blinds for private parties. There was a spacious cocktail lounge and an area that could be reserved for wedding receptions and other afternoon and evening affairs called the Motoramic Room. It was a popular lunch place for legislators who could be seen dining there every noon.

Promotion was one of George's best efforts. He wrote a column known as "By George" that ran every Sunday in the Lansing State Journal and the Battle Creek Enquirer and News. He filled it with jokes, anecdotes and casual references to the Terrace Room. Typical of his comments was the following, "Nothing can turn a woman's head faster than a mink coat going past on another woman."

Another promotional scheme was the distribution of "Let Dines Help You Celebrate" cards to guests. From those cards he built a mailing list. And when the appropriate anniversary or birthday would arrive he sent out a "Special Invitation from George Dines" to hold the party at the Terrace room.

Of course, without good food, the restaurant would hardly have survived. The restaurant had excellent food and reasonably priced for the time. The House Specialty

was a Lazy Susan Seafood Tray, filled with fresh sliced lobster, French fried shrimps, imported sardines, fried sea scallops, and cold shrimps. Another was a cheese tray that included American, Swiss, camembert and roquefort cheeses. In 1967 dishes included prime rib carved in the dining room, Chicken Aloha, Beef Almond Ding. His executive chef, Jay Pillbeam, started with the restaurant in 1956.

One of the areas was the Swing Door Saloon, styled after an Old West establishment that offered live entertainment. Celebrities such as Louis Armstrong and Fred Waring played there.



The restaurant closed on Friday, September 13, 1973 after 22 years of operation. Nevenka Dines opened a gift shop in Grand Ledge in 1977 and a year later purchased Cedar Plaza Shopping Center in Grand Ledge, all over George's protestations. He thought they should just retire. Nevenka said it was the best thing that had happened to her after George died following a long illness on January 23, 1981. Six years later in 1987 the Greater Lansing Convention and Exhibition Center was opened on the spot where the Terrace Room stood. Nevenka was chairperson of the planning committee for its grand opening.

Both George and Nevenka gave back to their community. George served on boards of the Lansing Safety Council, the Lansing Press Club, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. He was treasurer of the Lansing PTA Council. Nevenka worked with Big Sisters and the Cystic Fibrosis Center in Lansing. George was a member of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church.

They had three children, daughter Lenna Victoria Dines, 1942-1998, Gregory George Dines, 1946-2010, Geoffrey G. Dines, 1956-present. George, Lenna and Gregory, and his father, George Sr., 1886-1963, are all buried in Hillside Cemetery, Section 7, Lot 4, Delta Mills, Delta Township, Eaton County, Michigan. His cousin Theo Dines and his wife are also buried in the same plot. There is a fine red marble monument on the lot, with a small garden of flowers, well cared for by loving family and every bit as elegant as the restaurant he tended for so many years.

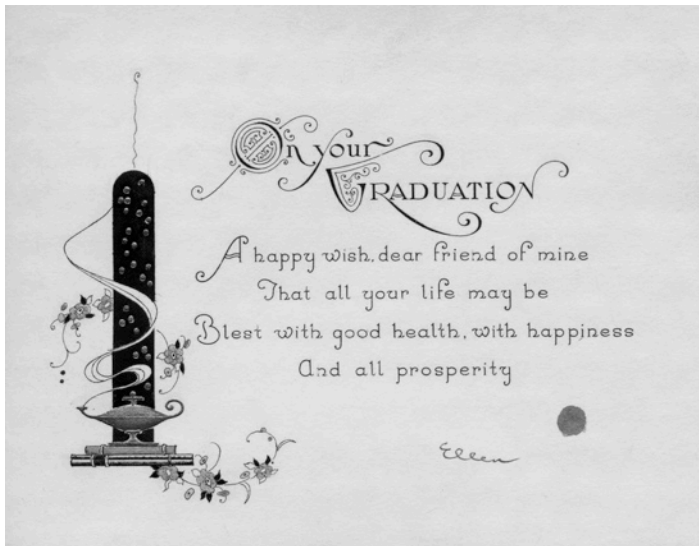


# Treasures From The Vault

## The Morlok Quadruplets' Scrapbook

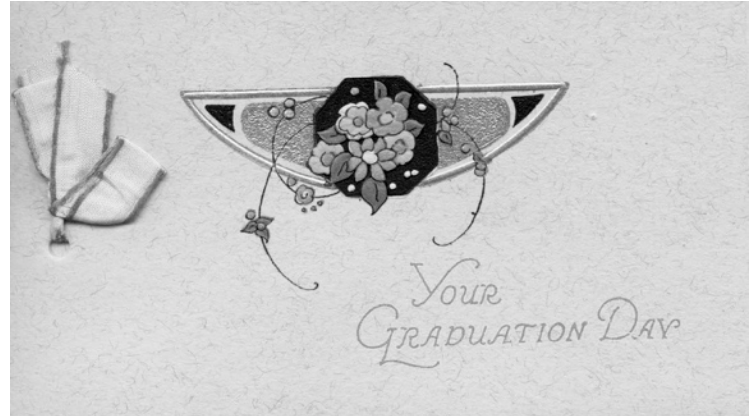
Saving Memories From Senior Year  
by Mary L. Kwas

In spring 1925 Marian A. Damon graduated from Lansing High School. During her senior year, Marian kept a memory book, called “Happy School Days,” which now resides in the collection of the Forest Parke Library and Archives, Capital Area District Libraries. Memory books were a kind of scrapbook, similar to wedding books and baby books, that were popular in the early 20th century and continue today in different forms. Unlike blank scrapbooks, the bound memory books had printed pages with titles that suggested places for names of friends, favorite subjects, clubs, activities, gifts, and other topics, although owners often ignored the titles and filled the books as they pleased. Marian’s memory book provides us a personal glimpse into high school life in the 1920s. While many of the traditional activities—sporting events, favorite classes, graduation banquets—resonate with us today, the specifics have changed over the years.

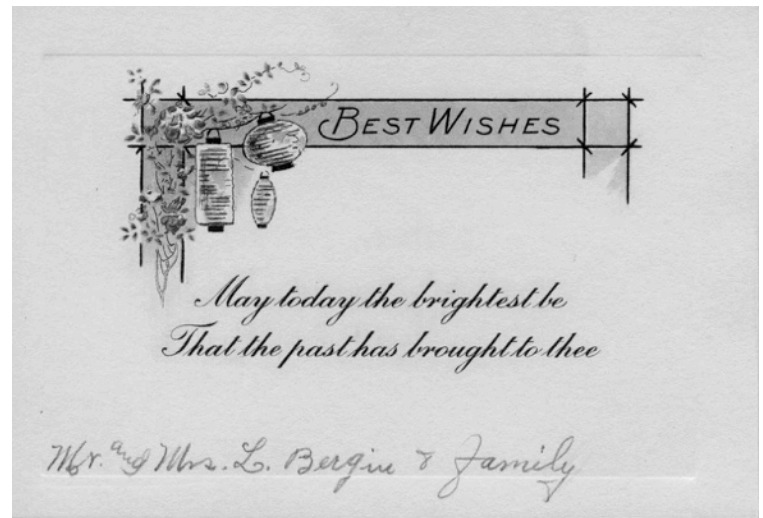


Marian included small black-&-white photos of favorite teachers and “chums,” using decorative photo corners to hold the pictures in place. She also added the set of class photos that were published in the local newspaper. Friends signed her book with silly rhyming verses. For example, Mildred Doty offered: “Apples are good / But peaches are better / When you are gone / Write me a long letter.” Eleanor Bailey wished: “Remember me early, / Remember me late, / Remember the nite we / Swung on the gate.” These kinds of verses had a long life

and probably are still being used in yearbook greetings today.



Various souvenirs and memorabilia were pasted into the book, including wrappers from sweets, handwritten notes, and sketches made by friends. There were brochures and pictures of movies and favorite movie stars, song lyrics, Latin poems, and sayings. There were programs from plays and musical performances that she attended, and football and basketball schedules with the scores written in.



Besides pasted-in ephemera, Marian also wrote out long lists or made notes of information. She identified her classes for senior year, which consisted of algebra, Latin, English, civics, ancient history, geometry, chemistry, U.S. history, and physiology. She listed over 100 favorite books, which included multiple titles by such authors as Harold Bell Wright, James O. Curwood, Booth Tarkington, Zane Grey, Gene Stratton-Porter, Louisa May Alcott, and John Fox Jr.

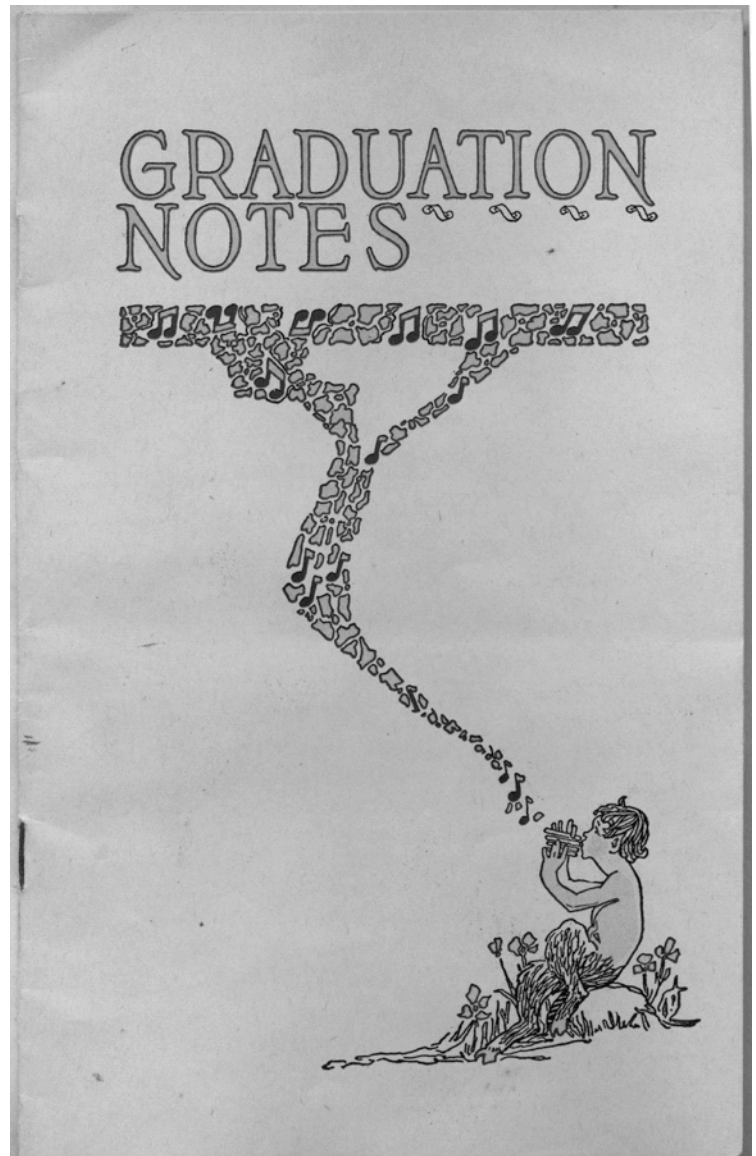
Marian included specifics pertaining to her Class of 1925, such as the name of class officers. She noted that the Class Song was “Hail! Hail! Lansing High So Dear,” and the Class Motto was “The higher we rise, the grander the view.” The Class of 1925 even had its own Class Yell: “Kickety-Huss / Hickety-Huss / Twenty-five that’s us.



As graduation neared, the Senior Banquet was held on April 24. A copy of the menu and program was included in the memory book. The rather mundane meal consisted of fruit cocktail, creamed chicken, mashed potatoes, buttered peas, spring salad, rolls and jelly, ice cream, cake, and coffee. Various speeches were included in the program, while music was provided by Archie Burgdorf and his LHS Jazz Band.

Small souvenir booklets with lists of graduation gifts received were included in the memory book. There were also many graduation cards with the beautiful graphic designs typical of the 1920s. Many of the lovely graduation cards probably came with the gifts she received from family and friends. Graduation gifts today might include jewelry, money, and a new computer and smart-phone to use at college. Marian’s gifts also included jewelry, as well as personal items and books. She received a diamond ring from her mother and a garnet ring from her grandmother. Her uncle gave her a watch. There were also pearl beads, a silver compact, an ivory powder box, silver spoons and napkin rings, and gold and silver pens. Other gifts included silk stockings and silk jersey bloomers, a \$5 gold piece, the works of Shakespeare, handkerchiefs, a traveling vanity case, a boudoir lamp, perfume, stationery, and chocolates.

Marian was born in 1908, so was only 17 years old when she graduated. She was the younger of two daughters of John and Grace Damon and lived at 719 W. Kalamazoo Street. Her father worked in an auto factory doing final assembly. After graduating from LHS, Marian went on to Michigan State University, where she completed a degree in teaching. It appears she never married, but worked throughout her life as a teacher in schools in Oakland and Washtenaw counties and at West Junior High School in Lansing. This cherished keepsake, kept for her own pleasure and memories, now allows us to appreciate the similarities and differences of high school life of nearly a century ago.





Historical Society of Greater Lansing  
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